DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 440 674 JC 000 277

TITLE	Teachers of Life--Learners for Life: Faculty Stories in Service Learning from Miami-Dade Community College.
INSTITUTION	Miami-Dade Community Coll., FL.
SPONS AGENCY	Corporation for National Service, Washington, DC.; American Association of Community Colleges, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	45p.
CONTRACT	97LHEFL046
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - General (020)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Active Learning; Community Colleges; *Experiential Learning; *Service Learning; Student Needs; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Role; *Teacher Student Relationship; *Teaching Experience; Teaching Methods; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Miami Dade Community College FL

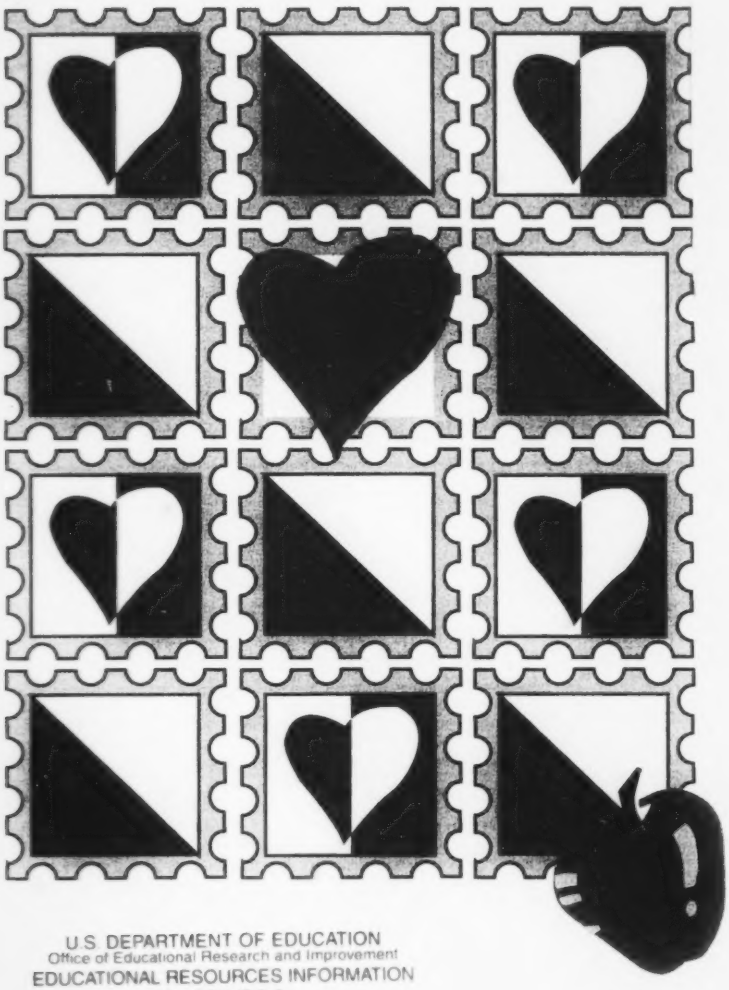
ABSTRACT

This publication contains faculty stories about experiences with service learning from Miami-Dade Community College. The stories are first-hand accounts of real learning and how lives change because of that experience. The stories come from teachers who see themselves as facilitators of a student's own active learning; who look for and commend their students for enhanced self-esteem, realization of new possibilities, and signs of having gained new perspectives; who understand that adult learners are unique and that experiential learning is a part of adult learning theory; who understand their student's needs, concerns, and interests and integrate them into their teaching; and who are actively involved as leaders in the classroom. The articles and authors included are: "Service Learning Creates Super Heroes," by Diane Sloan; "From Whence Cometh My Heart," by Paula Sanchez; "Of Service Learning," by Alberto Meza; "Service Learning: A Nagging Purpose," by Dorothy Sole; "Service Learning: Fostering Faculty Development," by Sharon B. Johnson; "Service Learning in the Arts," by Alberto Meza; "From Ideology to Playing Piano," by Lynda Pinto-Torres; "An Impossible Idea," by Marta Bret; "Learning That Sticks," by Nancy Davies; "Little League Baseball and Leadership," by Robert J. Exley; and "Reflections on My Involvement with Service Learning," by David B. Johnson. (VWC)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 440 674

Teachers of Life – Learners for Life



Faculty Stories in

Service Learning

from Miami-Dade

Community College

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Miami-Dade COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Teachers of Life – Learners for Life

Faculty Stories in Service Learning from Miami-Dade Community College

. . . a teacher ought to be a stranger to the desire for domination, vain-glory, and pride; one should not be able to fool him by flattery, nor blind him by gifts, nor conquer him by the stomach, nor dominate him by anger: but he should be patient, gentle and humble as far as possible; he must be tested and without partisanship, full of concern, and a lover of souls.

– The Sayings of the Desert Fathers

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Foreword

In their seminal work on teaching excellence in community colleges, *Teaching as Leading*, George Baker and John Roueche identify five characteristics common among excellent teachers. Excellent teachers . . .

- see themselves as facilitators of a student's own active learning rather than as experts transmitting information,
- look for and commend their students for enhanced self-esteem, realization of new possibilities, and signs of having gained new perspectives; they see value in learning,
- understand that adult learners are unique and that experiential learning is a part of adult learning theory,
- understand students' needs, concerns, and interests and integrate them into their teaching; they assume a directive and influential role in facilitating learning, and
- are actively involved as leaders in the classroom through the use of motivational, interpersonal, and cognitive skills.

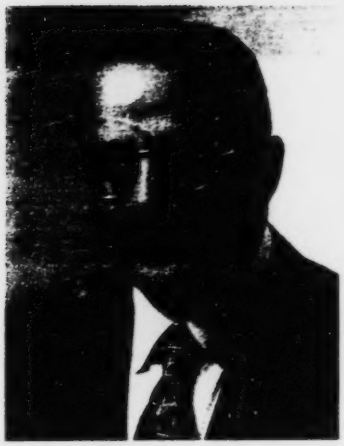
The stories found in this monograph come from just such teachers. Parker Palmer speaks of the need for teachers to resist, nay, refuse to enter into the realm of student bashing. He exhorts us to look beyond the surface issues that students bring to the college classroom and become engaged in their lives. This ability to seek out and bring out the best in students seems to be a given with the faculty members who write here.

Just as Parker Palmer exhorts us to value our students as fellow learners, we believe that once we truly make students the center of the learning environment then it is simply amazing what can happen for each of us.

We believe that as you read the stones in this work you will be able to identify with the dedication and compassion of a teacher. You, like us, will experience the joys and pain of genuine personal and professional growth. We also believe that you will catch a glimpse of what really makes a teacher a teacher of life and a learner for life.

We trust you will enjoy the personal reflections of our friends and colleagues at Miami-Dade Community College.

Bob Exley & David Johnson



Message From the President on Service Learning:

In this new age of the world wide web, we have placed an inordinate value on information. Our electronic reach has given us access, but has it taken us to the more elevated realms of understanding and wisdom? It has been said that unless one thinks and sees in a new way, that learning has not really occurred.

The stories in this publication are impact stories. They are first-hand accounts of real learning and how lives change because of that experience. Service learning – connecting a dedication to community growth with personal development – is a combination that is hard to beat. When the world becomes a learning laboratory, the learning process is accelerated and deepened.

Miami-Dade Community College is extremely proud of its service learning program. The College is committed to the needs of our community and the development of relevant and innovative learning methods. Service learning epitomizes that commitment.

I want to thank our storytellers and so many more people – our faculty, staff and students – for their inspired work. Their efforts are proof positive that service learning delivers genuine learning.

Sincerely,

Eduardo J. Padrón

President

Miami-Dade Community College

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Contents

DIANE SLOAN
Service Learning Creates Super Heroes 7

PAULA SANCHEZ
From Whence Cometh My Heart 9

ALBERTO MEZA
Of Service Learning 12

DOROTHY SOLE
Service Learning: A Nagging Purpose. 13

SHARON B. JOHNSON
Service Learning: Fostering Faculty Development 17

ALBERTO MEZA
Service Learning in the Arts. 21

LYNDA PINTO-TORRES
From Ideology to Playing Piano 23

MARTA BRET
An Impossible Idea 27

NANCY DAVIES
Learning that Sticks. 30

ROBERT J. EXLEY
Little League Baseball and Leadership 32

DAVID B. JOHNSON
Reflections on My Involvement With Service Learning. 38

Service Learning Creates Super Heroes

Diane Sloan

I was absolutely delighted when I received the news that I had been invited to attend my first Campus Compact national conference in Arizona last spring. I was confronted with the tiny problem that the travel arrangements involved one of those long three-hour layovers at the Houston airport. With this rather daunting prospect in mind, I decided to load myself up with plenty of entertainment ammunition. In this arsenal was packed the series of interview tapes that Bill Moyers had made with Joseph Campbell in 1988 entitled *Man and the Myth*.

I had watched this six-hour series on PBS during one of their notorious pledge drives, but I had always wanted to take more time and really concentrate on what Professor Campbell was actually saying. If there ever was a time for me to indulge in this philosophical journey, it was during my Houston airport hiatus. In addition, I had a large stockpile of service learning information to reflect on as a result of the conference. I was armed and ready to appreciate the hours of contemplation that Continental Airlines so generously had given to me.

Heroes are Born

As I listened to the tapes, I became aware of the connection between serving others and how heroes are created. I began to understand why there was such a clearly defined transformation that had taken place in all of my Dynamics of Leadership classes last term as a direct result of the service learning projects.

In the interviews, Professor Campbell explained that a hero is a person who takes himself, as well as a group of others, on an adventure to some "other" place, and returns to find that everyone is lifted to a higher level. At least that is my interpretation of what was being explained. It is easy to understand this notion if you have ever had the experience of working with others in servant leadership roles.

And this is a perfect explanation of what really happened to the students and to myself as we worked together to complete the various service learning projects to which we had committed ourselves. As a result, I witnessed numerous occasions when students began experiencing life-changing transformations. So many of these students started off on their own adventures, taking others, and coming back at a level of remarkable change. I call them super heroes in their own right.

Of course, their changes affected me in every dimension of my life. I began wondering how I had ever taught with any kind of competency in the last 20 years. Actually, I decided not to be so hard on myself and quickly turned the idea around to capitalize on the fact that the college now gave faculty members

the support by providing a service learning program. In essence, the effect of this learning experience has given me the opportunity to see students grow in ways that I have never been able to see before.

Another dimension in which I have been affected by service learning is my own family. As a mother of three young girls, I have often wondered how I could give direction regarding their spiritual development and community involvement.

My children and I have recently undertaken a community job that we do once a week. We live directly across from their elementary school where we do our "garbage hike." This involves picking up the litter around the school. Admittedly, this little act of community service is short, sweet, rather simple stuff. But it's the stuff of which little heroes are made. And as parents and educators, we know how the story goes. Little heroes turn into big super heroes before we know it.

My involvement in service learning has been one of the most far-reaching, valuable experiences that I have ever had in my life. A quote from one of my students says it all: "This experience will stay in my heart for the rest of my life. I am no longer the person that I was, I am better." In my opinion she, like so many others, has become a super hero. If Joseph Campbell were still alive and could see some of the incredible adventures that our students have taken all of us on, I'll bet he would not hesitate to say, " These are the heroes of our time!"

Diane K. Sloan serves as an Associate Professor, Sr., in the Speech Department on the North Campus of Miami-Dade Community College.

From Whence Cometh My Heart

Paula Sanchez

Every once in a while I stop what I'm doing and think, "What brought me to this place in life?" In this particular instance, my mind goes back to a pretty little library nestled near the Chippewa River in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. I don't remember exactly how I was introduced to Literacy Volunteers of America, but I do remember trekking through the snow to the library twice a week where a class of nine or ten Hmong students waited to be taught English. I wasn't the lead teacher — just an assistant there to provide a bit of help to the slow readers or the ones who wanted communication practice. It was also my first contact with anyone who was Hmong.

The Hmong are a group of people who had helped the United States fight during the days of the Vietnam War. When the U.S. withdrew its forces, tens of thousands of Hmong were left behind in the mountains of their native Laos to be persecuted by a government who viewed them as traitors. Many fled (and are still fleeing) into Thailand where they lived (and still live) in refugee camps waiting for visas to enter the U.S. or France.

Because the Hmong are accustomed to a quiet life in an agricultural society, the U.S. government sent them to live in parts of Northern California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin (among other places). The weather up north was certainly a big change for them, and the type of agriculture they were used to was virtually impossible in the hills of Wisconsin, but they settled in quietly and worked hard to adjust to their new way of life. And now I was a part of their new existence, just as they were a part of mine.

I learned a lot during that year — more than what any book could have taught me. I learned historical facts I'd never been exposed to before, I felt the pang of cultural differences, I saw the struggle that comes with economic problems, and I listened to music that was beyond anything I'd ever imagined. I was so inspired by my time with Literacy Volunteers of America that I decided to change my field of study from advertising design to education. TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) became my area of focus.

Years later I find myself working as a vocational ESL teacher here at Miami-Dade Community College. My students are mostly Latin American refugees who reinforce some of the same lessons I learned from my Hmong students long ago. Many were forced to leave their native lands; they feel the same struggle to succeed and they watch their children grow up in a cultural environment that is still foreign to them. As their teacher, I help them improve their level of English, which, in turn, gives them confidence to communicate with people outside their culture group. Yet, all these new-found

9

skills would amount to little without the opportunity to put them into practice.

Sixty percent of Miami's residents speak Spanish. New immigrants in this environment find it easy to avoid the English-speaking world. Our students tend to live in Spanish-speaking neighborhoods, shop in stores where Spanish is spoken, eat in Latin-American restaurants, and watch Spanish TV. It's a safe little world they've built around themselves, but excruciatingly limited.

At first, it might seem that our students need to be helped through some sort of community service, but what we've found to be more effective is having our students help others.

We offer service learning in our VESL Program as one of two options — the other being a series of taped interviews. Most students opt for the 10 hours of community service knowing that

- it helps them improve their communication skills in English,
- it offers an inside look at various fields of work that might otherwise be inaccessible to them,
- it introduces them to people who might one day be needed as references or contacts for a job opening, and
- it looks good on a resume.

What many students don't count on, however, is the potential for service learning to change their lives.

After students have finished their service learning requirements for the course, they sometimes come into my office and show me pictures of the friends they've made at the nursing home. They tell me they've become a girl-scout leader or that they've been offered a job in the hospital where they were volunteering. Some students go on to be math tutors, dance instructors, or chess club leaders at the schools where they volunteered their time, and others have changed their whole career just as I did long ago. They see themselves as making a difference, and their confidence gets a boost (as well as their language proficiency).

There are other students who return to class complaining that the people they were helping never made any move to speak with them.

"I lost my time, teacher — I didn't speak English there."

"But you helped others. They were happy you were there. You made a difference in their lives."

"Yes, but that wasn't my objective. My objective was to practice English, so I lost my time."

"But even if you weren't speaking English, I'm sure you gained something from your experience there."

"No, teacher, I didn't gain anything. I'm very busy with my family and job, so I just lost my time."

When I first heard this, I wanted to shout out, "Don't be so narrow-minded!"

I had to stop myself, though, because I saw myself in those students. Volunteering opens up a new world to anyone who is willing to see it. Service learning is full of potential, but without taking initiative, what can be gained? It's almost as if those students and I were *afraid* to open up our lives to anything beyond what we were accustomed to. It would complicate things — we might feel something that was strangely uncomfortable, or maybe our whole lives could *change*.

So the students closed their minds, and I went even further by not putting myself into the situation in the first place. Not that the idea hasn't occurred to me. I've always thought that a Saturday spent with Habitat for Humanity would be fun, and I've caught myself slowing down when I pass The Palace at Kendall Senior Center and almost turning into the drive.

Why not volunteer a few hours each week to chat with some lonely elderly people? All my family members live far away . . . but what if they get attached to me? What if I disappoint them if I don't come one Friday? I don't want them to have to wheel around and go back to their rooms feeling disheartened. And working downtown with the homeless? What would I say? How would I act?

I guess it's the fear of the unknown. It keeps some people from starting conversations, and it keeps others from traveling outside of their well-worn circles. The worst part is that it makes me feel *old*. What's happened to me? I used to relish anything new. Now I dread the responsibility and change that might come along with it. I've become too practical, and maybe a bit too selfish . . . Not that I have to stay that way.

I know from experience that the positive outcomes of working for fellow human-beings far outweigh any negative consequences. I say this to my students every term, and now I'm saying it to myself. Yes, it might change your life, but what is life without change and growth? I'm glad I got involved with the Hmong back in Wisconsin; it made my life what it is today. I'm glad that I'm asking my students to volunteer, and I know that next term I'll be volunteering, as well. With a little initiative and an open mind, great things can happen.

Paula Sanchez serves as an Instructor for Vocational ESL Grammar and Communication on the Kendall Campus of Miami-Dade Community College.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Of Service Learning

Alberto Meza

We fill all the empty spaces
exerting almost no force
the props and the puppets
fit like echo to sound
and then the students
crack jokes
exhausting the timid eloquence of wit
and I understand
the fullness of life with service and learning
and I sit quietly while the students repeat some lines
that resonate of thoughts of growth
and realization of dreams

We all fill the empty spaces
exerting almost no force
and the props and puppets
come alive
with lines
extending the thought
that crowds the docility of contentment

And now life fills all the spaces
and philosophers quiet down
and poets become unnecessary

And through those spaces
history slides away as a poisonous snake

And words reach the farthest
corners of the flowery reception of light

And I am contented just
to sit to enjoy the marvel of an ancient art
where words become spheres
filling all the empty spaces
and exerting no force
at all

Alberto Meza, Associate Professor Sr., serves in the Arts and Philosophy Department of the Kendall Campus and holds the Citibank of Florida Endowed Teaching Chair.

Service Learning: A Nagging Purpose

Dorothy Solé

The Nagging Assignment

I received my schedule for the March/April eight-week term I teach for VESL (Vocational English as a Second Language) in the Language Center of the Department of Continuing Education at the Kendall Campus of Miami-Dade Community College. On Monday and Wednesday mornings, I was assigned Level D Grammar, the fourth course of our six-tier program.

As a key requirement of Level D, students must participate in the service learning activity or design and implement an interview project. It was the policy of the department to strongly encourage students to elect the service learning option. However, a large number of our primarily adult students hold one, sometimes two jobs, and care for families, in addition to the 15 hours of English per week they must take if they are to qualify for financial aid.

How was I to deliver the bad news that my students were expected to allot 10 hours of their precious "spare" time to service learning? I had a nagging notion that service learning was not going to be an easy sell.

I spoke to my supervisor about my reservations. "Tell them that through their service learning they will be repaying the community for covering their tuition." "Tell them that they will be helping the community that helped them."

I was very dissatisfied with these justifications of the extra imposition on my students' time, and I had no intention of facing class mutiny upon announcing that completion of 10 hours of volunteer work was required for passing this course. My first job was to overcome my own doubts about service learning.

Identifying some direct benefits for the "volunteers" was less of a chore than I first feared. Our students are learning English primarily to get better jobs. Within that context, I realized that service learning could offer them opportunities to:

- practice English in a professional environment,
- gain professional experience in Miami,
- initiate a professional networking system in the career of their choice,
- begin their list of people who could provide professional recommendations,
- compile suitable material for their resumes,
- become acquainted with and experience American business practices, and
- bond with the local community.

Armed with suitable ammunition, purposes I believed in, I was ready to tackle my class.

The announcement of the service learning requirement was greeted with pre-

cisely the dismay I had anticipated, but we began to discuss the benefits of the project. The students themselves suggested many of the advantages, and in addition, came up with others, of a more spiritual nature, I had not even dared suggest.

"We will be able to

- serve the community,
- feel good about ourselves because we have helped others, and
- make friends with new people."

On the third day of class the service learning program staff came in to officially introduce the project. They handed out the packets of introductory letters, contracts, and time sheets. The students objected and whined just as I had foreseen.

So we reviewed the notes and located and repeated the previously identified rewards. In addition, I pointed out that 50 percent of the final exam consisted of a formal presentation to share with the class what they learned from the experience. The combination of brainwashing and threats effectively crushed overt rebellion.

The Nagging Implementation

By now I have taught classes with a service learning component several times. It involves not only a commitment on the part of the students, but also demands resolution on the part of the instructor. Trained in holistic education, I am an advocate of John Dewey's philosophy of experiential learning as opposed to sterile classroom exercises and lectures; but I have also found that experiential activities are often cumbersome to implement.

Service learning, from the instructor's perspective, involves paperwork, management, record keeping, and what is, to me, particularly distasteful, nagging. The first weeks of the term, I need to spend a few minutes after taking attendance asking each student whose contract is missing for a status report. Upon turning in the contracts, students receive a big button with the logo "Speak English With Me."

I make a considerable issue of exchanging each completed contract with a button. I feel a bit silly about this, but most students, adults though they may be, love it and their broad smiles attest to their delight with the bright yellow plastic brooch. The badgering and contract-for-button exchange continue until all the contracts are in and duly registered in my grade book. Occasional insurrections are quelled with the litany of reasons for the service learning project, elicited from the class.

By the fifth week of the term, students begin to turn in their completed time sheets, and the nagging and threats of failure start again. At this point, however, I introduce the "Formal Presentation," the oral component and 50 percent of the final exam. I model the presentation by sharing with them a service learning activity I took part in when I was getting a master's degree some years ago. An outline of the information is shown on a screen using an overhead projector and plastic transparencies.

After my presentation, we discuss the organization of the information and methods of preparing overhead transparencies. For the modeled presentation I use hand-made transparencies, but students who are registered for our computer lab may participate in a Microsoft

Powerpoint workshop where they will make their transparencies using one of the most popular presentation software packages. Either handmade or computer-generated transparencies are acceptable. Attempting to wing the presentation without transparencies, students are warned, constitutes automatic failure on the oral part of the final. This precludes unprepared expositions. In addition, it underscores the importance of finishing the contract hours on time. For me, it also means ordering the projectors from the AV Department, supplying and selling blank plastic transparencies to simplify the assignment for those students who do not have easy access to our college bookstores, and nagging again, this time for the return of the completed time sheets.

The Results

Because of the underlying structure I have provided when I modeled the presentation, the insistence on the use of overhead transparencies, and, I strongly suspect, the continuous nagging, no student has ever delivered a totally unacceptable presentation — to the contrary, most have been very well thought-out and beautifully conveyed.

The majority of the presentations reveal genuine reflection about service learning experience and many students take considerable time to create stunning slides. The first time, even I was amazed by the quality of the presentations. They seemed indicative of the students' conviction of the relevance of the service learning project. Still I wanted to verify their feelings about the activity. On the final course evaluation sheet I asked, "What did you think of the service learning activity? How did it help your understanding of the English language and/or American culture?"

To my surprise, while some students were more enthusiastic than others, no one registered complete dissatisfaction with the project. Although many students had yet to master the English language, the following brief listing of responses indicates the impact on my students.

- The service learning is a good activity. This program helps us to improve our English and our speaking in public.

- For me it was a wonderful idea because with service learning I had to speak English and make an appointment. The first time I had to do this, I was scared, and I thought that I could not do this, but today it is OK.
- The service learning activity was a great opportunity for me because this way I practiced my English, and it gave me the opportunity to meet other people from different cultures.
- It was a wonderful experience.

On the last day of class, the strong young man who had been most sluggish about completing his work startled me by giving me a big bear hug. "Thank you," he said, "for keeping after me to finish."

The Purpose of Nagging

I learned from this experience that, as distasteful as it may be, nagging has its place. In the minds of the nagged, nagging seems to indicate interest and significance. None other than Arturo Rubenstein, the great piano virtuoso, believed that had someone been after him to practice more when he was a child, he might have reached even greater heights as an adult. But his parents, he lamented, had been too busy, too concerned with other pressing matters to devote the time and energy to force their little boy to play hours of scales. Maestro Rubenstein criticized his parents for not caring enough to nag at him.

So, I guess it is all right to nag if, in the end, students:

- show greater self confidence,
- develop pride in the results of their efforts, and
- improve their understanding of the subject.

It will probably never become my preferred style of teaching but

Long live purposeful nagging!

and, more to the point

Long live service learning!

Dorothy Solé serves as an Instructor for Vocational ESL in the Language Center of the Continuing Education Department at the Kendall Campus of Miami-Dade Community College.

Service Learning: Fostering Faculty Development

Sharon B. Johnson

What can a college gain from involvement in service learning? One answer to that question is "faculty development." Certainly, those of us who are familiar with the service learning literature know that a great deal of attention has focused on the benefits of service learning for students and for the larger community. We know that service involvement fosters a sense of civic responsibility, enlivens academic learning, and can make a real contribution toward ameliorating the social problems in our society. I believe, though, that beyond the satisfaction of knowing that we have contributed to our students' learning and played a part in connecting our students to their communities in a positive way, there are some specific benefits that we, as teachers, can experience — benefits that can be broadly described as faculty development. This includes growth in our roles as teachers, growth in our relationships as professional colleagues, and growth within ourselves as individuals.

Growth as a Teacher

It has often been noted that we tend to teach the way we were taught. For most of us that means a teacher dispensing knowledge, usually through a lecture format, then students memorizing that material, and being tested on it later. As a form of experiential education, service learning encourages us to get outside of the old "lecture, memorize, and test" pattern.

Instead of the teacher as sole dispenser of knowledge, the role of the teacher changes to that of learning facilitator. Drawing upon the richness of real-life experience, the teacher uses the insights and ideas students bring back to the course, through their service experiences, to foster greater understanding. Using reflection as a springboard, the service learning teacher starts where students are, helping them to make critical connections between new concepts, the service experience, and their own lives.

For several years, we have asked our students why they became involved in service learning. They tell us they become involved because they want to help others but also because they want a new experience. Like our students, using service learning provides us with a new experience of teaching, a new way of interacting with our students and our course material. More important than just a new experience, though, is the fact that so many faculty members see service learning as a superior way of teaching.

In order to learn more about how using service learning as a teaching strategy changes the teaching role, we interviewed and surveyed Miami-Dade Community College faculty members who were using it. Responses from 71 faculty members indicated that 92 percent believed that using service learning

had enriched their teaching and over half (52.5 percent) reported that involvement in service learning had changed the way they view their role as a teacher. Faculty members asserted that service learning made them better teachers in that it fostered student learning by making course material more "meaningful" and "interesting." Service allowed students to "round out their total experience" by providing learning options and by allowing students to apply what they learned in class.

One never achieves real change and growth, however, without some anxiety and at least a few moments of doubt. Growth as a teacher is no exception. Taking on a new role, letting go of total control of the teaching process, can be stressful, and several faculty members reported feeling concerned about how it would turn out. One math teacher recalled telling her students there would be a volunteer requirement: "Well, I was afraid that most of them would get up and walk out or later go to the nearest drop window. I figured this isn't going to be popular." Another professor in a social service field experience course had even stronger reservations: "Well, for me it was scary. I was always concerned about not being on top of what the students were doing . . . It was a bit nerve wracking."

Yet, for the vast majority, it is clear that the benefits of using service learning, both for their growth and for that of their students, far outweigh any difficulties associated with it. Despite a substantial percentage (64 percent) of faculty indicating that using service learning increased the work associated with teaching their courses, and despite the concerns about carrying out the strategy successfully, faculty members see its value. Indeed, probably the best evidence for the positive effect of service learning on teaching comes from the teachers themselves. When asked, 97 percent of the Miami-Dade Community College faculty who were using service learning said that they intend to continue to use this teaching strategy.

Growth as a Colleague

Service learning can also enhance our development and sense of connection as members of a learning community. As faculty members, we interact directly in the learning process with our students and in other ways (on committees, in department meetings, in routine day-to-day encounters, etc.) with members of the faculty, staff, and administration. From my personal involvement in service learning and through direct service projects in the community, I have been able to form connections and see aspects of my colleagues that I otherwise would not have had the opportunity to do.

I first became closely involved in our college's service learning project when I joined our college-wide service learning management team in 1994 as the project researcher. Being on the management team has provided me with the unique experience of working with a particularly dedicated and talented group of faculty members and administrators who share the goal of creating a truly outstanding service learning program at our college.

As a member of this group, I have seen how people with diverse talents and different ways of approaching issues and carrying out decisions have been able to work effectively together by using those unique talents to create a dynamic synergy. We have the "visionaries" who help us go beyond what any of us thought

was possible and the "doers" who focus on how we can make those dreams happen. Being on the management team has shown me that any successful leadership effort must include people of diverse talents and temperaments, that we each need to be "visionaries" and "doers," and that any group will only be as successful as the group's ability to channel and use everyone's talents in the best ways possible.

Becoming involved in service learning at the college also introduced me to the national service learning community. Being able to attend conferences, to share ideas with service learning professionals from colleges and universities across the country, and having the opportunity to share what we are doing at M-DCC by making presentations before my colleagues at those gatherings has been an invaluable experience for me. Since making those initial contacts, I have had the opportunity to continue working with people from other schools through writing for national service learning publications. Reading about the experiences of others through their articles and following the ongoing discussions on the national service learning listserv have kept me connected to a whole new world of ideas and interests.

Service learning also introduced me to people at the college whom I probably would not have otherwise met. As part of a planned effort to foster an ethic of service at the college, the service learning management team developed the "Taste of Service" series, which invited faculty, staff, and administrators to participate directly in service experiences in the community.

We made and distributed food to homeless people in downtown Miami through an ongoing church-sponsored program, helped families build and landscape their own homes through Habitat for Humanity, and visited hospitalized veterans through the Holiday Project. In each case, we set aside time to interact and reflect, to explore personal reactions, experiences, and insights.

At each session, an important part of the reflection focused on the role of service in our personal lives, how service can foster student learning, and the roles we can play in that process as we carry out our various functions at the college. In the process, I learned much about my colleagues, their personal experiences, their strengths, their struggles, and unique talents. In this way, service involvement and the service learning movement allowed me to bond with a group of people at my own institution, another set of colleagues who had much to share, but whom I would never have known had it not been for service learning.

Growth as a Person

Probably one of the most interesting findings from our research is the impact of service involvement on faculty members' personal growth and development. We were surprised to find that fully 94 percent of the service learning faculty agreed that involvement in service learning had contributed to their own personal growth. From interviews, we learned that much of this had to do with feelings of satisfaction and achievement that they felt as successful, striving professionals. Over half of the service learning faculty reported that they had learned more about their community, their students, and themselves and that they grew from that knowledge. Certainly one of the most interesting examples was one pro-

fessor who described himself as having been personally changed by his involvement in service learning. He explained: "I have a reputation among certain people of being 'cold-hearted' . . . And I was pretty moved by what happened with the students a lot of the time. It apparently had some very profound effects. It was a pleasure to see that, and it probably made me a little less cold-hearted."

For me, service learning brought together and enhanced a number of threads in my life. Early on, I developed a keen interest in learning about other people, their ways of life, their perspectives, and problems. I took an interdisciplinary social studies major as an undergraduate, and continued my interest by earning a master's degree in Sociology. Like others of my generation attending college in the 1960s, I believed that by working together as a community, country, and world, we could solve society's problems and make life better and fairer for all people.

Twenty-four years of teaching at Miami-Dade Community College and a Ph.D. in Community College Education channeled my interests and idealism. Service learning brought these threads together. Involvement in service learning has enabled me to combine my intellectual interests through reading, research, writing, and working with colleagues from across the country, with my desire to serve and to give my students the opportunity to learn through service. Along with the other service learning faculty at Miami-Dade Community College, I can truly say that I have grown from the opportunity and experience of service learning.

Sharon Johnson is a Professor in the Independent Studies Department on the Kendall Campus of Miami-Dade Community College.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Service Learning in the Arts

Alberto Meza

How does an instructor create service learning strategies for the studio artist?

First, I had to find out what needs for art existed within my local community. One cannot imagine the many needs for art and for the work of artists that do exist in the local community. Finding ways to merge my creative instincts, passions, and joys as instructor with the needs of the community through the use of classroom teaching is the real challenge. Perhaps it is this complexity of planning that has made it difficult for me to convince my colleagues, the art faculty members in the studio courses, to join me in the service learning genre.

For, you see, I know that the traditional easel and canvas approach to the teaching of foundation studio courses in drawing, painting, two-dimensional, and three-dimensional design can definitely be enhanced through service learning. I believe that the use of new pedagogical methods is a must if we are to meet the educational and personal needs of our community college population. At M-DCC, this is a student population composed of part-time, older, minority, and limited English proficiency students. These same students come to us under-prepared in terms of knowledge. Furthermore, most, if not all, of them have limited fundamental art studio skills. This reality is compounded by the wrong belief that art skills are learned by rote repetition of "splash and dab" exercises with very little value besides the fact that the students are "making art."

Both the teacher and the artist in me cry, "*foul.*" The facts of today's world are very simple. If our students are to be able to meet the needs of a demanding art-related marketplace, we much teach them a new order of skills. The very nature of studio work can be detrimental to our students' essential exposure to the network of connections and interrelationships that only a community can furnish us. We must begin to see the art classroom as much, much larger than the studio. We must see the entire community as our classroom.

My service learning experience has helped me to see quite clearly that most potential employers of artists expect to hire individuals skillful in handling the art elements (line, value, light, color, etc.) coupled with a strong understanding of design principles. This is a given. They also desire individuals who can think independently, rationally, creatively, and who possess a solid sense of community.

Is not a sense of "community" something that we have always cherished in the art community? Do we not, even today, love to embrace the concept of a community of artists? Think of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Think of the Coconut Grove Art Festival. The most exciting aspect of these is the idea of community or oneness.

I assert that service learning both fosters the development of and focuses on the practical learning skills relative to the real

21

world that the students will encounter as they explore the competitive job market of the arts. To teach in this manner has demanded much from me, but I believe that I have grown as an artist and as a teacher through my experiences here at Miami-Dade.

I am fortunate to have had the support of the service learning program over the past few years. My Humanities students and I have focused on the rich history and cultural environment of the Overtown community. We successfully participated in a number of community initiatives sponsored by different community agencies like the Black Archives of South Florida, the St. John Child Care Center, and the St. Agnes/Rainbow Village Community Development Center. These students have written and produced plays, provided tutoring and art instruction for elementary students, and developed and distributed an elementary Activity Workbook that tells the history of the community. Finally, we wrote, staged, and presented an original play, *Overtown, My Town*, in Overtown elementary and middle schools. The activity book complemented the play.

I have had to carefully restructure how I teach my courses. The progressive transition from classroom instruction and textbook work to successful implementation of service learning activities must be integrative and natural. This has led me to establish a basic tenet — I rely on the community needs to inform and define classroom activities that support the learning of my course competencies.

For me, the first service experience can be a simple one like a class project in Art Appreciation. Then, the service activities can become more involved in a sequential manner. For example, my Beginning Drawing class began by offering a "Drawing Performance" of Goya's *Family of Charles IV*. This was a multi-media presentation of drawings, acting, and stage setting that took place in our school cafeteria. The same class is now involved with designing a large mural to adorn one of our college buildings.

Also, my Art Appreciation students, my Drawing students, and a select group of Studio Workshop students planned, designed, and built an Itinerant Puppet Theater that houses puppets for a Dario Fo's *Mistero Buffo* presentation. The show was staged during the Arts and Letters Day at the Kendall Campus on April 1, 1998. As a true *commedia dell'arte* performance, the students first staged the puppet presentation as a mix of puppets and live actors. Then they took the show on the road to the Overtown community's Frederick Douglass Elementary School.

For me, the net result of a service learning approach to the teaching of art is creating an improved and exciting learning environment. The environment addresses the needs of a diverse student population and provides a vital means for our college to serve the local community through positive and valuable art-related experiences. Oh yeah, it also makes for a wonderful, creative time for the artist in the professor.

Alberto Meza, Associate Professor Sr., serves in the Arts and Philosophy Department of the Kendall Campus and holds the Citibank of Florida Endowed Teaching Chair.

From Ideology to Playing Piano

Lynda Pinto-Torres

These last three years have been both the most challenging and the most rewarding in my life as a teacher. There has been an evolution in my teaching style, perhaps a revolution, that probably began in some small way many years ago, but that has definitely matured since 1994.

I have come to see the classroom not as the locus of learning, but as a springboard (launching pad?). The ivy-covered walls of academe used to have more of a hold on me. (I must admit an occasional craving for cavernous buildings full of musty tomes, pale students brushing past one another in silence.) But, in this age of two-dimensional television, plus "The Web," I have found that students need more to awaken their intellectual curiosity than the traditional class lecture, note-taking, and term paper.

The first phase in my new teaching began with the National Issues Forum (NIF) approach that I used in my Speech classes during the 1994-95 college year. I really liked the emphasis on taking personal responsibility for one's actions and seeing oneself as an integral part of the community that made up the NIF approach. Yet, there was one thing missing from this method: personal experience.

Most of our students, new to the United States and isolated from the English-speaking community, had never experienced many aspects of American life, and yet they were being asked to think of effective solutions to problems that they had not yet encountered, or of that they had superficial, and often highly biased, knowledge. Clearly there had to be a way for the students to learn more about issues of concern to most people without involving more "teacher talk."

A few students understood that the concept of community being encouraged by the NIF approach extended beyond the limits of family. They began to make some very interesting suggestions.

"My neighbor's children always get home before she does," said one, "and they have to play by themselves. I will invite them over to play with my children until she gets home."

Another said, "I'll volunteer to work in my children's school to help the boys and girls learn the difference between right and wrong."

Their suggestions about volunteering their help to bring about positive change in society led to my offering extra credit to those who wished to put their words into action. Five elected to do so, and I was impressed by the changes I noticed in that handful of students. Their participation in class changed significantly. They showed more enthusiasm, were excited about using English in a real context, and they began to produce solutions to problems that were more relevant and evidenced new thinking.

23

This, in turn, produced changes in me. I discovered that my attitude toward them had shifted a bit. I am always interested in my students' progress, but I found I was fascinated by what I could see taking place for them. I admired them for agreeing to help others in spite of their busy lives. I began to interact with them more like colleagues than students. This experiment with sending ESL students into the community was so successful that I decided to make it an integral part of future speech classes, but I wasn't sure how to go about it. The job ahead loomed large. Enter the Service Learning Center and phase two of my evolving revolution.

With the help of our Service Learning Center, the next term my students became the first ESL students on the Kendall Campus to be involved in service learning. The center helped me a great deal. We worked hard to learn the best way to employ this new approach to teaching, and the center provided important assistance for my students to overcome their fears, reluctance, and anxiety. By the end of the semester, students from two classes had completed 970 hours of service in a broad array of settings, and I had begun to master some of the rudimentary skills of reflective teaching and service learning.

As I mentioned earlier, I was beginning to notice a slight shift in my own attitude toward my students. Perhaps I had been guilty of the very kind of generalizations about them that I had seen them make about others! ("Oh, when will *they* ever remember to use 's' on the third person singular form of the verb?" "How many times do I have to tell *them* not to begin a question that way?") Instead, I saw them as the unique individuals they really are, and I found myself focusing on their strengths rather than their weaknesses.

I was so enthusiastic about the excellent results I was getting that I also added a service learning option to my Humanities class. And this set the stage for the third phase of my evolutionary revolution.

In November 1995 and March 1996, I accompanied students from my ENS and Humanities classes on two boat trips to clean up Biscayne Bay. I could sense that the students and I were forming a special bond. They began to stop by my office more often to chat about what they were doing, look at snapshots of field trips, and ask questions about the jour-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

24

nals, group projects, and other assignments. The classroom itself became a warm, lively, and nurturing place.

However, something was still amiss!

I began to notice that there was one person who was not volunteering any time in an agency, who could thus only participate in reflection sessions from a somewhat detached manner, who understood the importance of community service and experiential learning but could only receive knowledge indirectly, and who, of course, had never written a journal about the experience.

I was that person!

I realized that, no matter how many hundreds of hours my students contributed to helping others, I was evading the question I had posed initially: "What can I do to help solve the problems of my community?"

First, I considered visiting my students at their service sites. I rejected this idea for several reasons. A few agency supervisors seemed defensive. Scheduling the visits proved to be more difficult than I had anticipated. I still wouldn't be contributing anything. I then thought of volunteering for one of the agencies listed, but couldn't decide on where I might do the most good.

Things continued to progress well in all of my classes throughout the fall of 1996, but I still had not become personally engaged in service. Finally, it occurred to me that I should do something that I love, and know how to do well, for the people that I want to help. So I decided to offer free piano lessons to the children of migrant farm workers in Homestead, Florida.

After making a few phone calls to churches and centers in the area, I contacted Centro Campesino Farm Workers' Agency. Although they were very busy due to a January freeze that had left many farm workers without income, the people with whom I spoke were cautiously polite, and agreed to allow me to bring my electric piano on Saturday mornings to one of the trailers used in their after-school program. They also agreed to send out questionnaires to see how many of their children were interested in receiving piano instruction. Seventy-five children said "Yes!"

From the very first telephone contact, I began to understand more profoundly what my students experience. I felt their "first-day jitters," the feeling of being out of one's comfort zone, the excitement of meeting new people, being in a different environment, doing a non-routine job, and wanting to please. Reflection sessions became livelier. I could truly relate to what my students were saying!

I kept a journal of my activities. This, too, helped me in appreciating the difficulties students encounter when writing their own journals. I encourage my students to be creative in their journal writing, and the results are often delightful. Now I understand why.

The "Homestead Music Project" with its use of service learning has contributed greatly to my professional growth. I have been a classroom teacher for many years, but now I am also an administrator. To make this work, grants had to be written, budgets carefully developed and adhered to, accurate records maintained, activities documented, community leaders contacted, meetings scheduled and attended, food ordered, student and AmeriCorps workers supervised, schedules established, and on and on. Oh, and

by the way, *the children must receive quality musical instruction!*

In a very short time, I have developed a greater appreciation for my co-workers who make it possible for me to concentrate my energies on my primary love — teaching.

As for my classes, student feedback indicates growing satisfaction among students with my evolving teaching style. During the fall term of 1997, 98.5 percent of my students in four classes were 100 percent in agreement with all statements on the student evaluation. This compares to 89.7 percent the previous year. Likewise, student retention and success have improved markedly.

During the fall term, 92.6 percent of all the students enrolled in my six classes received grades of 'A', 'B', or 'C' compared to 80.4 percent in the preceding five terms. I have not lowered standards for student success. If anything, I may expect even more of my students, just as I am learning to expect more of myself in terms of personal accountability, creativity, initiative, insight, tenacity, and sheer hard work.

In the past three years, I have become increasingly convinced of the benefits of supplementing regular classwork with experiential learning derived from involvement in the community combined with guided reflection. I have also learned that we (teachers) should "practice what we preach!" I have tried to lead my students into the community (or have they led me?).

Lynda S. Pinto-Torres, Associate Professor, Sr., ESL Core, serves on the Kendall Campus of Miami-Dade Community College.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

An Impossible Idea

Marta Bret

Service learning! In an eight-week intensive program for adults who are already working, supporting a family, and receiving services themselves? An impossible idea! This was my reaction to the concept of introducing yet another activity to an already jam-packed curriculum for our intermediate-level-D Grammar and Communication classes.

I have had experience with community service before. I am firmly convinced of the validity of community service *per se* and of service learning as a tool for the traditional student on campus. In fact, I have completed a certain share of service myself and I have worked for a nonprofit organization in the past.

I fully appreciate the many benefits it brings to both the recipient and the donor. I have seen the educational impact it has on middle-class university students who, for the first time in their lives, experience the actualities of layers of society other than their own.

Nevertheless, I had two grave misgivings. One, I was concerned because our students were nontraditional. Two, I was uncertain as to how service could realistically be accomplished within the time constraints and intensity of our existing curriculum.

A majority of our students are Hispanic and vocational. They work full-time and complete the required three hours of class either before or after working all day. This takes place five days of the week. The schedule leaves little time for homework and family responsibilities, let alone community involvement.

In addition, the students, for the most part, are unfamiliar with how to participate in an organized service agency as a donor of time. Their cultural backgrounds have taught them to help each other on an individual basis, and although I have often seen them generously donate material goods and money to charities at the college, time is much more difficult for them to give.

Also, many of our students receive financial aid and their contacts with organized agencies have been on the receiving rather than the giving end. Finally, I anticipated that many students would be reluctant, and rightfully so, to use their developing and still defective English skills within an alien culture and unknown organization. It is safe to use these skills at the college, but not so safe in another setting.

In fact, the time constraints proved to be the most daunting obstacle. It became necessary to be more and more firm with the students regarding their complying with deadlines for completing contracted hours of service and their turning in of the necessary forms. Even with the increased emphasis on deadlines, some students attempted to hand in the forms late, with a few students even waiting until the last class meeting.

For my part as the teacher, and since an

27

oral presentation on their service learning experience made up 50 percent of the final exam grade, it was imperative that I improve the students' compliance with deadlines. This has remained a nagging concern.

Recently I attended a workshop on service learning provided by David Johnson, and I hit upon a possible solution. When Dave spoke of the importance of reflection on an ongoing basis, I at first dismissed the concept.

Didn't he realize that we do not have much time for philosophical discussions? We must address our grammar-based communication competencies.

However, as I gave it more thought, I

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

28

realized that ongoing reflection could be the answer to the problem of deadline compliance. If communication activities are grammar-based, why not make reflection grammar-based?

With this in mind, I wrote questions for an ongoing discussion of the service learning experience. I structured the questions so that they addressed the grammar found in each chapter we cover. The questions are designed to point out the differences in how social problems are handled in the United States versus the students' native countries. In addition, the questions focus on the students' experiences within the service agency — their feelings, their analysis of what they were learning, and their comparisons between their expectations of the experience and the actuality.

I believe that using these questions on an ongoing basis, even encouraging the students to come up with their own questions, will prove very beneficial. As the students become more familiar with the service agency through the questions, we can increase their awareness of the different issues and facilitate a higher level of interest in completing the experience. It should also help them prepare for the final presentation through analyzing the experience and by providing opportunities for practicing English.

Through this, I believe the students will gain confidence in their ability to make themselves understood outside the classroom and in the community, as well. Finally, these ongoing discussions provide a constant reminder regarding the importance of complying with deadlines and completing the service commitment.

I intend to use grammar-based ongoing reflection in the future. The problem with time constraints will never go away, but as the students realize how their service can improve their learning of English, I expect that compliance problems will diminish.

Marta Bret serves as an Instructor for Vocational ESL in the Language Center of the Continuing Education Department at the Kendall Campus of Miami-Dade Community College.

Learning that Sticks

Nancy Davies

When I received an invitation to attend a workshop on service learning at the Kendall Campus, I was curious. I knew that in the world of education there was no greater teacher than experience. As a teacher for "God knows how long" and as an adjunct professor at the Homestead Campus for nine years, I always welcomed any opportunity to give my students hands-on, practical, experiential knowledge. I knew that if this project could work, it would provide the type of learning that "sticks."

At this time, I was teaching college preparatory-level reading and writing. For some reason, many college prep students feel a little less adequate than regular college students. They feel that they haven't quite made it yet. They are unsure of their self image. They question their abilities.

They often think: Can I make it in college? Can I become a person of influence and authority?

In any event, I attended the workshop with an open mind, but with some

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

30

doubts as to how this could really work with college prep students. I wanted it to, however. Professors who had been using service learning in their courses assured me that it could work at any level. So, I gave it a try.

I am happy to say that it accomplished more than I could have anticipated and probably more than I will ever know. In this experience, I saw students come alive with self-respect, responsibility, and concern. The following quotations from my students prove this point:

"I found that I could make a difference in a child's life."

"These students need someone to care about them and help them. I felt good about myself when I did this."

"I felt very sad when it was my last day. The students asked me to come back because they needed me. It felt good."

It would be a fair assessment to say that service learning gave these students the positive, confidence-building experiences necessary for success in college. They expressed that, with the limited amount of education they possessed, they still had much to contribute to the service experience. They could make a difference in another person's life.

Also, many students were struck by the necessity for community involvement. They expressed their concern that all citizens should volunteer some time to help the community. But they most especially believed that volunteers were necessary to help school children succeed.

I ask myself this question:

"Is there any way that I could have imparted these ideas and values to the students without using service learning?"

My answer? An emphatic *no*!

Nancy Davies serves as an Instructor in the College Preparatory Reading, Writing, and English Department at the Homestead Campus.

Little League Baseball and Leadership

Robert J. Exley

In South Houston, Texas, in the early 1960s, two young boys grew up knowing each other through sports. They were not close friends. One was the stereotypical young athlete: physically larger than other boys his age, well coordinated and talented. He was the star pitcher in baseball, the star quarterback in football, the star guard in basketball. Well, you get the picture.

The other boy was an average-sized youngster with better than average athletic skills but lacking in self-confidence. He was always a good player, never a star, but fiercely competitive. While the two youngsters eventually played on the same teams at school (one as the star and the other as second string), their first encounters were via Little League baseball and they were intense competitors.

It was in the context of a Little League baseball game that a remarkable event took place for the less-gifted of the two — me. We were playing Steve's team when I came to bat in the bottom half of the final inning with two men on base and our team behind by one run. Steve was pitching for the Mets. He had pitched a no-hitter the week before, and I was determined to get a hit and win the game.

His first two pitches to me were balls. The second one nearly hit me. To this day, I can clearly remember the adrenaline surge, my heart pounding in my chest, and feeling afraid, excited, and determined. I just knew that I was going to succeed this time. I was going to get the game-winning hit, and for a change it would be my team (the Dodgers) celebrating instead of Steve's.

The world around me seemed to shrink so that it contained only me and Steve. I was willing to swing at anything to get a hit. The next pitch Steve threw was so far outside and so high I could not have hit it with a telephone pole. I swung anyway. I missed. Steve quickly deduced that I was over-charged. He delivered the next pitch. This time he deliberately missed the strike zone. I swung and failed to connect with the ball. The third high and outside pitch followed. I swung again, missed, and struck out. We (I) lost. The Mets (Steve) won — as usual.

The remarkable part of this story is that my striking out was just the beginning, for I found myself with a goofy grin on my face, the bat forgotten in my left hand, striding out toward Steve with my right hand outstretched to shake hands. Rather than being angry at failing, I was filled with an unexpected and inexplicable joy. Steve had a similar grin on his face. Not the smug smile of triumph, but a warm, delightful smile of a secret shared. We enthusiastically shook hands and walked off the field together with our arms draped around one another's shoulders.

In essence, what happened for us that day was that the *process* of participating superseded the *outcome*. When this same experience takes place in education, where the joy of learning becomes more important than the grade received, I am fulfilled. I tire easily of those students who demand that I give them the "right" answers so they can "make their As" and go on to the next class. I am equally frustrated with those students who fail to engage themselves in the learning process, or simply fail altogether. To the contrary, I am thrilled by those students who demand that I assist them with comprehending why an answer makes a difference.

Service learning, more than any other educational pedagogy, provides a means for the *process* becoming the focus rather than the *outcome*. The natural settings of the experiences many times defy the existence of "the right answer." Therefore, service learning requires students to engage their entire being in the educational process through active learning. Yes, even through that almost-forgotten art of *thinking*. But the greatest thing about service learning is that it makes these same demands on me as the teacher.

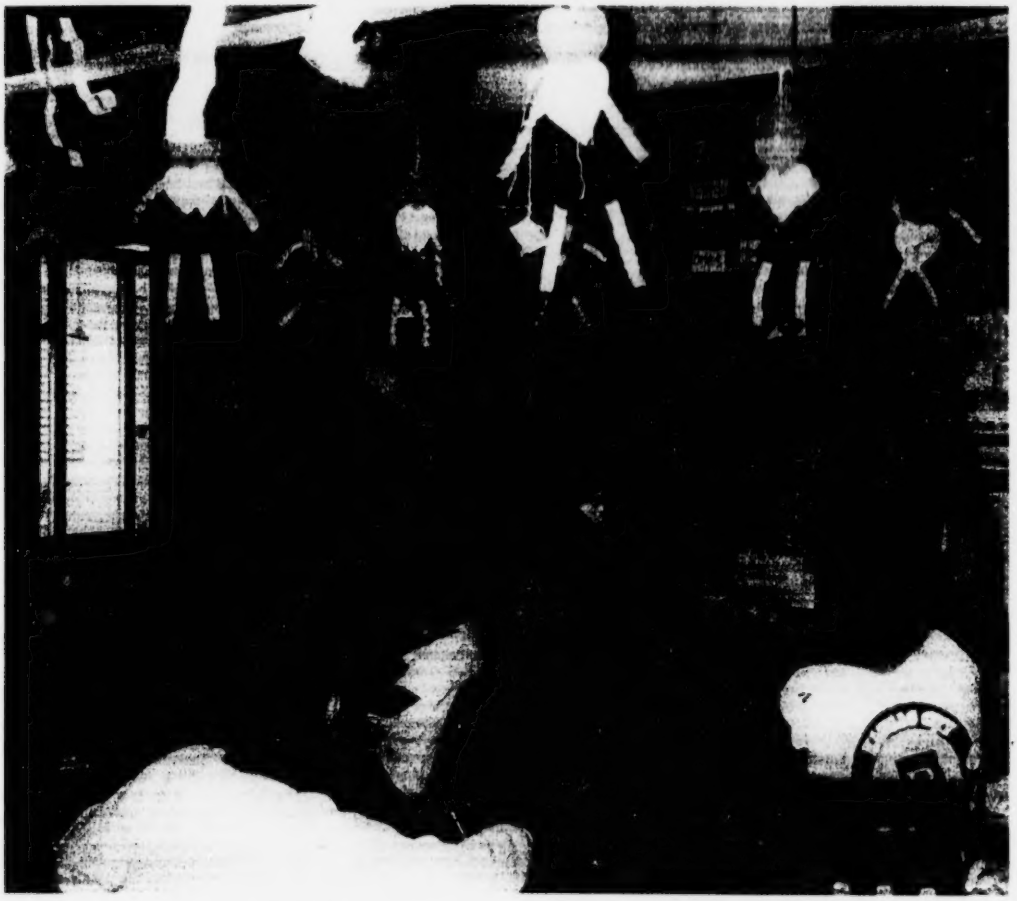
I, too, must become fully engaged in the magic of the teaching and learning relationship. I cannot rest on my laurels as the "expert" with all of the answers. Instead, it pushes me to become a more genuine player in the learning process. For the most part, I take great pride in my discipline and the knowledge I have acquired through my years of studying my discipline. I love to ponder the concepts, constructs, theories, and possibilities I find in the disciplines of psychology and educational administration. And yet, just engaging in intellectual exercises can leave me feeling very unfulfilled.

To tell you the truth, I am delighted to be part of the wonderful world of the academy. I believe that I am blessed to have the chance to excite students about my discipline. And yet, I have come to understand that while I have a professional responsibility to be true to my discipline, I have another obligation that is just as important. I must be true to my students. I must be genuine and real with them. To do this, I have had to enter into the fray of learning on an equal footing with them. I have had to revise my perception of myself from that of a "professor" to that of a "teacher and a guide." This requires that we, the students and I, comprehend that although we have different roles, responsibilities, and statuses in the classroom, each of us (student and teacher) is equally valuable within the learning environment.

I have had to learn how to continuously engage myself in a process of reflective learning where my students and I are equally committed to making the learning environment greater than a sum of the parts. For my part, I have determined that I will never be satisfied with anything less than excellence. I will place the student's learning needs at the very center of my classroom, and that requires more work than I ever dreamed possible. Yet it also has resulted in more personal satisfaction and rewards than I deserve.

It means that I must continually develop two primary skills that do not come naturally to me as a teacher. First, I am learning to be a much better listener. The natural response for me as a teacher is to talk first and listen later. Service learning has forced me to get a bit better

33



at listening first. Second, I am learning to be less controlling of my classroom. The first inclination I have is to structure my course in such a way that I know exactly what I will be covering in class every single minute of every class meeting. Service learning has helped me to see that real learning requires that we, to quote Myles Horton, "make the road by walking," and it is exciting to have realized that the students and I walk the road together.

One other key thing that service learning has forced me to do is to examine the concept of freedom in a way that I had not done before. In academia, we speak of freedom a great deal. Academic freedom is a cherished and valued ideal. In community colleges, we hold the concept of the "open door" as the most basic of our virtues. We also continue to wrestle with the concept of "right to fail" versus "right to succeed." For me as a teacher, I believe that freedom really comes down to how I balance my desire to be an "objective" professor with my responsibility to be a "subjective" guide for my students.

As an objective professor I am only concerned with the important knowledge from my discipline that the students must master. As a subjective guide, I am concerned with how the knowledge of my discipline can be incorporated in the daily living of my students. I am concerned with how they value the learning experience, which includes their personal relationship with me. I must earn their respect, and I cherish their trust. I am

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

not just a purveyor of information. I influence the lives of my students.

Consider the words of Edward Gibbon:

> In the end, more than they wanted freedom, they wanted security. They wanted a comfortable life and they lost it all — security, comfort, and freedom. When the Athenians finally wanted not to give to society but for society to give to them, when the freedom they wished for most was freedom from responsibility, then Athens ceased to be free.

This sounds hauntingly familiar as one reflects on our current state of affairs where everyone facing tough times or serious challenge seems eager to be seen as a "victim" of some past wrong, some failed program, some flawed policy, some other person's failure — in essence some "thing" out there.

We live in a society where few, so very few, of us are willing to stand up and say: "I did that! I made that choice! I am responsible!" Service learning has forced me, as the teacher, to stand up and acknowledge that I am responsible for my students' success in a way that I had not really done before. To do this, I have had to carefully examine,what I believe about the nature of others and, in so doing, that of my students.

A Constrained or Unconstrained Vision

Thomas Sowell in his essay "A Conflict of Visions" eloquently challenges us to confront our tendency to over-simplify the world of human nature into the black-vs.-white categories of good or bad. He speaks to our internal perception of our fellow sojourners through life as either a "constrained vision" of human potential or an "unconstrained vision" of human potential.

If I view the basic nature of humans as if, when they are given a choice, individuals will be selfish, mean, and morally limited, then my vision of human nature is constrained. In other words, without effective external controls, guidelines, laws, and punishment, human beings will naturally be evil. Since people are naturally selfish, according to this view of human nature, they need an external motivation to care about the good of others. On the other hand, if I believe that most people are concerned about others and desire to put the needs of others before their own, then I embrace an unconstrained vision of human nature. In other words, people do not need elaborate external systems to force them to care about others. People naturally are good.

I believe that Sowell's concept of either a constrained or unconstrained vision aptly demonstrates the basic paradox of freedom. It also describes the ongoing conflict I face as a teacher. On the one hand, I want to believe that every single student is equally honest, capable in the learning environment, and motivated. Yet, I also struggle with feelings of frustration, animosity, and helplessness when faced with the student who is dishonest, ill-prepared, or unmotivated.

Wouldn't it be nice, in some ways, if only two categories of human nature did exist?

Well, I don't believe that human beings are simply one or the other, evil or good. We are complex beings capable of doing both great good and great harm at the

same time. Service learning brings this reality right into the classroom. Even more noteworthy for me in my development as a teacher is that service learning brought this reality right into my own psyche. I had to come to grips with my own feelings of ambivalence toward those "less motived, less prepared, less willing" students. I had to acknowledge that my responsibility to my students goes beyond my ability to inform them of the knowledge found in my discipline.

I also learned that within each of us exists this same paradox with regard to our expectations for our own success. For me, service learning increased my ability to help my students see that they are quite capable of leaving the bonds of average to walk in the realm of excellence. When my students no longer plod along in the middle of the curve, it forces me to excel also, and when this happens, other people notice. When other people notice, their expectations of me increase.

I am delighted to accept this challenge and I enjoy passing this challenge along to my students. In short, it is essential that we, as educational leaders, be willing to confront our own concepts of others. We must accept the responsibility of our intellectual freedom by diligently examining and re-examining our vision of others.

Accepting the Challenge of Leading

Scholars have always been able to influence the thoughts and lives of others. John Gardner, in his 1987 Harry S. Truman Lecture, puts it this way: "In leading, in teaching, in dealing with young people, in all relationships of influencing, directing, guiding, helping, and nurturing, the whole tone of the relationship will be conditioned by your faith in human possibilities."

I have determined that I control setting the tone of my relationships with others, and I define my vision of students. I am now more willing than ever before to accept that I "lead" students every day. I believe that leaders are those who influence others and have the courage to accept the responsibility that accompanies that influence. I also believe that I am not unique to the teaching profession because I see many other teachers, here at Miami-Dade Community College as well as other colleges across the country, who do this on a continual basis.

Finally, service learning provided me with the opportunity to examine my leadership actions according to Gardner's four moral goals of leadership. As a teacher-leader I must always strive to (1) release human potential, (2) balance the needs of the individual and the community, (3) defend the fundamental values of the community, and (4) instill in individuals a sense of initiative and responsibility. A critical pathway for succeeding with the moral goals of leadership has been to strive always for harmonious leadership where my words and deeds are consonant.

Harmonious leadership demands that I establish an ethical set of standards on which to base my actions. I recognize that: I am human and need the help of others, and that my individual complexities must be held together by a fundamental set of values and beliefs. Finally, I must clarify my own values and visions in a highly personal manner. Effective service learning demands that I do this, and I readily admit that I am inconsistent at times.

The joy of service learning is that it allows us to recognize that the process is just as important as the product. It has assisted me to see that I — the professor, the teacher, the faculty member — am also a process and not a product.

A Final Challenge

As I contemplate how I have been affected by my involvement in service learning, I am amazed to realize just how much I have come to love the excitement of unconstrained visions for me and my students. The magic of teaching and learning and learning and teaching continues to be most exciting, and just as I experienced an unreal sense of joy when I faced Steve and did my best as a youth, I now experience that same joy when I think back on the past few years. I am not real sure how or when the emphasis moved from product to process but I am most grateful.

When I consider the future possibilities for service learning, I can't help but think of the lines from Tennyson's *Ulysses*:

> How dull it is to pause,
> to make an end,
>
> To rust unburnished,
> not shine in use!
>
> . . . Come, my friends,
>
> 'tis not too late to seek
> a newer world.

Robert Exley is the Department Chair for Community Education on the Wolfson Campus and served as the original Director for the College's Service Learning Program.

Reflections on My Involvement With Service Learning

David B. Johnson

My involvement with service learning over the past five years has been the defining experience of my college teaching career. I came to teaching later than most, following a thirteen-year career in community mental health and decades of participation in social activism and volunteer service.

When I began teaching, the use of community service as a means to enhance and enrich student learning seemed natural and necessary. Little did I know that my early incorporation of community service hours in my first classes would lead to my total immersion in the philosophy, pedagogy, politics, and everyday practice of service learning.

Since joining the faculty at Miami-Dade Community College in 1991, I have encouraged students in my psychology and business administration courses to actively engage course concepts by experiencing the transformational pedagogy of service learning. In July 1993, I represented the college as part of a three-member team at the Campus Compact Institute on Integrating Service with Academic Study at Brown University. The work at this conference resulted in the development of a college action plan and helped shape a proposal that was ultimately funded by a Learn and Serve America: Higher Education grant in August 1994. This grant provided the necessary financial support to develop an infrastructure for the broad application of service learning at the college.

I had the privilege of serving as the college-wide faculty coordinator of the project. In this role, I was responsible for explaining and promoting the strategy to my colleagues to encourage them to use service learning in their classes and thus develop a dedicated core of skilled practitioners. To do this, I worked with a management team to organize a comprehensive service learning program that included faculty mini-grants to provide financial support, instruction, and technical assistance to a select group of faculty members as they used service learning in their classes.

In the past three-and-one-half years, this program has formally supported over 70 faculty members, with more than 50 others receiving all but financial support as they incorporated the strategy in over 90 different courses. To date, this comprehensive service learning program has placed 6,388 students who have provided 138,304 hours of service to more than 400 agencies in our community.

In August 1997, we were fortunate to receive a renewal grant from Learn and Serve America: Higher Education to broaden our project and expand into the areas of primary and secondary education with an emphasis on teacher education and support for President Clinton's America Reads Challenge.

38

From the very beginning of my involvement, I have experienced only joy in witnessing the transformation in my students, the program, and myself as the service learning program has established itself as a legitimate and respected teaching strategy at the college. This experience has changed the way I view my role as a teacher, as a colleague, and as an individual.

As a teacher, I have had the great joy not only to see real learning take place, but also to witness time and time again the personal transformation that occurs when students engage the real world in a unique relationship as a server and a learner. These experiences have transformed my teaching.

I teach five or six sections each term, but because of service learning, teaching remains fresh and exciting. Service learning changed my relationship with students, moving me from the stage to the side, from being a disseminator of information to facilitator of personal and academic growth. These, I believe, are more realistic and effective roles in a vital learning environment. Service learning is a more demanding teaching strategy than the traditional lecture/test format, but from my own experience and the reactions of students and other faculty, I know it is worth the extra effort.

Since 1995, I have taught twelve sections of a human relations class utilizing a fully integrated service learning approach. Prior to committing to a full integration of the pedagogy, I basically used community service with a reflective paper as extra credit in a student development/study skills course. The human relations course provided an ideal academic context to apply the strategy since it was originally conceived as an experiential course. Prior to this time, most of the experience was in the classroom using role playing and group interaction. By utilizing service learning I believed we could not only bring real life into the classroom to inform our dialogue, understanding, and skills development, but also do some good for the community while we were at it. From the very first class, as this real life has been tumbling into my classroom, I have seen students enthusiastically engage the process of understanding the psychological concepts of human relations and to develop their skills as effective human beings.

I very quickly learned that this changed much about my experience of teaching. First, I dramatically reduced the time spent lecturing, replacing it with collaborative learning techniques and dialogue. With their service experiences, students now had many examples of human relations to offer the class as a catalyst for dialogue and the search for meaning. The learning strategy became much more inductive, building on the varied experiences, trying to find similarities, connections, and meaning.

While this might seem like less work in terms of preparation, it actually resulted in a much more intense and demanding experience for me as a teacher. Because of the variety of service experiences, I never really knew what might come up in class each day. I knew that on a specific day we would be discussing conflict resolution, gender differences, or nonverbal communication, but I wasn't sure what examples might be offered. My job was to help the students make connections between the experiences they were having, and the more formal concepts and theories of the psychology of human relations.

39

Many profound and highly charged issues have come into our classroom via this method. With a lecture, I had control over the beginning and end of a class or a topic. I could close the chapter. With service learning and reflective dialogue, a lack of closure is more often the case. Students and I often leave class perplexed by the difficulty of understanding the human experience. Often the class experience is very emotional, and students fully engage. Tears and laughter are frequent accompaniments of our dialogue as are periods of intense and heated debate.

During the shorter spring and summer terms, I teach the course without a service requirement. When I compare these experiences with my service learning sections, I notice the difference in the effect on my relationships with the students. While the teaching/learning process in these sections is still effective and enjoyable, the intensity of the students' and my involvement is just not as great. In the service learning sections, there is much more development of student-to-student relationships as well as student-to-faculty relationships. Because of the special and unique qualities of the service experience, students are eager to talk about what they have seen and done. In the reflective dialogues, students hear other students sharing very personal and powerful moments. As they come to find the inherent generosity of the heart through serving others, they and I come to find common ground — we develop community. This just does not happen as frequently in my traditionally taught classes.

The rewards and personal gratification from utilizing the service learning pedagogy do not come easy, but then nothing really good ever does. Service learning requires more work. It is often a tough sell in the beginning of the term — "What, thirty hours of service? Are you kidding? I work full time." There are additional administrative/clerical details and forms to attend to at the beginning and end of the term. And, there is the necessity to teach an entirely new way of learning to students who are used to a much more didactic, authoritative, and controlled learning environment.

Fortunately, our campus service learning centers have greatly reduced the promotional and administrative burdens by providing multiple and highly varied service opportunities to interest students and thorough, high quality management of the administrative/clerical aspects such as form monitoring and evaluation processes. As to the introduction of an experiential education philosophy to students, I find that they usually take to it enthusiastically by the middle of the term once they overcome their fears and dependence. Democracy and participation are ultimately more engaging than autocracy and passivity.

One other difficulty with service learning is the grading issue. Because I do not fully control the input to the class, there is not a complete homogeneity of experience. Therefore, there cannot be homogeneous outcomes. Multiple choice and objective tests do not work well in this context since the experience is by its very nature unique and subjective. Hence, I have utilized take-home essay tests to measure competency and mastery of course material. This introduces a level of subjectivity to the evaluation process that is further complicated by the deeper relationships that have developed through the reflective dialogues during the term.

Knowing of the student's transformation

and advancement on his/her personal journey of awareness through service seems to add difficulty to a fully objective evaluation based on a written document. Ultimately, however, I return to the question: "Have students mastered the stated objectives of the course?" and I evaluate accordingly. Grades for my service learning classes have tended to be higher than traditional courses, but I attribute this to the effectiveness of the strategy in motivating students and producing real learning.

Some of the greatest benefits gained from my involvement with service learning have resulted from the work I have done with my teaching colleagues at Miami-Dade Community College. As the faculty coordinator, my primary role is to explain and promote the strategy to as many professors as possible so they can effectively apply it in their classes.

I began this process with a series of presentations at each of our five campuses and then moved to presenting more focused skills workshops and technical assistance to those interested in learning more. Initially, I was reluctant, as a relative rookie at the college, to be making presentations to a seasoned faculty about a teaching methodology. But I quickly discovered that the people who attended these sessions were the most caring, motivated, and forgiving professionals I had ever worked with.

From the initial information sessions attended by over 80 people, 16 were selected for the first mini-grants. This

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

group and the nearly 40 other minigrant faculty that have followed have served as the core of our infrastructure at the college. By working with them and others who have participated in our program's activities like the Taste of Service Days, I have established some very close and meaningful professional relationships.

This is particularly true of the management team that grew from Bob Exley and I to include Josh Young within the first months, and in the next year added Don Maser, my wife Sharon Johnson, Luis Padron, and Sarah Garman, and now has expanded to include three campus coordinators, 10 part time staff, and 15 student assistants. As we have worked together to see the service learning dream become a fully staffed program, I have enjoyed some of the most stimulating, meaningful, and satisfying moments of my teaching career.

Because of the success of our program, which was one of the first federally funded Learn and Serve America projects, we were asked to share our experiences with other schools that were interested in establishing their own programs. This was a professional responsibility that I had not thought about before. I never really had a compelling reason to write for publication, but now I learned that people were genuinely interested in what we were doing. I actually felt like I had something to add to the national movement and felt responsible to write about our program.

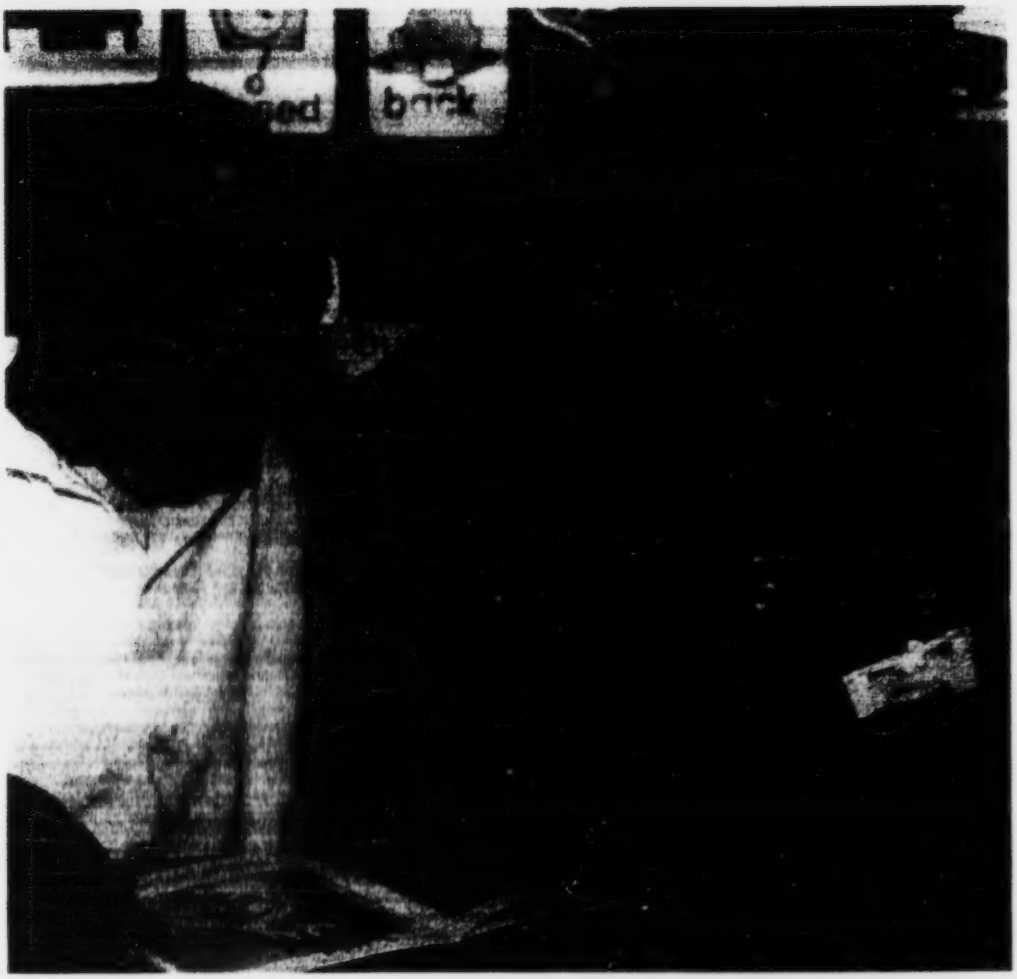
In the summer after our first year, I wrote my first article and co-authored another. To my great surprise and pleasure they were both published. Several other writing projects that were also published followed these, and in 1997 I had the chance to serve on the editorial board of the *Expanding Boundaries* magazine.

These writing projects led to opportunities to make presentations first at regional conferences and then at national gatherings like the American Association for Higher Education and the National Society for Experiential Education.

These conference presentations and writing projects were not on my agenda when I began my teaching career, yet they have been some of the most rewarding experiences I have had as a professional. Through them, I have participated in what I see as an important national movement to restore the ethic of service and to revive effective and meaningful practices to our educational institutions. Through this participation, I have created and interacted with a personal network of some of the finest and most impressive educational professionals throughout the country. I have been able to maintain contact with many of these individuals through continuing projects, attending conferences, and e-mail, and I feel like I know some of these individuals better than I know some in my own department.

My participation in the broader service learning movement has been very gratifying and it has truly expanded how I view myself as an educational professional. In addition, it has greatly enhanced my understanding of the service learning pedagogy and made me better able to apply it in my own classes and effectively work with my colleagues as they introduce the strategy in theirs.

Clearly, I have personally gained a great deal from service learning. I had the good fortune to have the opportunity to participate in the early educational efforts of Campus Compact and then to be part of a team that put a design to its dreams



and had them funded. The implementation of that dream allowed me to explore my strengths and weaknesses and the opportunity to develop myself as an educational professional. I have enlivened and enriched my teaching, witnessed the excitement of real learning, and experienced the transformation of my students and myself. Most importantly, I believe that my involvement in the service learning project has allowed me to make a significant contribution to our college and community by encouraging a new generation of active learners to care about their brothers and sisters on this planet. Not many experiences provide such rich rewards, and I am very grateful to have been part of this highly successful and meaningful movement at the college and in the broader community.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

David Johnson serves as an Associate Professor, Sr., in the Psychology Department on the Kendall Campus of Miami-Dade Community College and holds the Dr. Stanley Sutnick Endowed Teaching Chair.

Miami-Dade Community College would like to thank the Corporation for National Service and the American Association of Community Colleges for their support of this project.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES
Broadening HORIZONS
THROUGH SERVICE LEARNING

This material is based upon work supported by the Corporation for National Service under Learn and Serve America Grant Number 97LHEFL046. Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Corporation or the Learn and Serve America Program.

© copyright 1998 by Miami-Dade Community College
Second Printing, August 1999

Miami-Dade Community College District Board of Trustees

Roberto Martínez, Chairman; Hank Klein, Vice Chairman
Armando J. Bucelo Jr., Carolina Calderín, Helen Aguirre Ferré
Denise Mincey-Mills, T. Willard Fair
Eduardo J. Padrón, College President, Miami-Dade Community College
Jeffrey D. Lukenbill, College Provost, Miami-Dade Community College

Castell Vaughn Bryant, Campus President, North Campus
Richard B. Schinoff, Campus President, Kendall Campus
Jon J. Alexiou, Campus President, Wolfson Campus
Kathie S. Sigler, Campus President, Medical Center Campus
Roy G. Phillips, Campus President, Homestead Campus
Jose A. Vicente, Campus President, InterAmerican Campus

Miami-Dade Community College is an equal access/equal opportunity affirmative action institution.

This information or portions of it can be made available in accessible formats. For this or for special accommodations call 305-237-3848 directly or through the Florida Relay Service TDD at 1-800-955-8771.